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#0

contents

SECTION 1 The Vantage Market Guide
Hope you like Batman, 'cause here comes another one.

SECTION 2 Non-Sports Picks
Vertigo cards in hiding! Vantage finds 'em!

SECTION 3 Comics Are For Reading First
Hey, check out our new reading column!

SECTION 4 Walter Simonson Interview
Sit back for a chat with one of the nicest guys in comics!

SECTION 5 DC Comics Interview
The story behind Zero Hour, Valor, and other DC tidbits!

SECTION 6 The View from Oblivion
Life's okay, as long as you're not Flash.

SECTION 7 Vantage Viewpoints
Send us letters or you'll see a blank spot here next issue!

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Vantage: Press Release Review, Volume One, Number 0, September 1994.

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Cover: Spider-Man Clone TM & © 1994 Marvel Entertainment Group
Batman and Zero Hour logo TM & © 1994 DC Comics

Top Picks of the Month

Batman #0 (DC/Zero Month)
Current Spider-Man titles, all issues (Marvel/Clone story)
Detective Comics #0 (DC/Zero Month)

More Vantage Picks

Firearm #12 (Malibu/Ultraverse)
Generation X #1-up (Marvel)
Legends of the Dark Knight #0 (DC/Zero Month)
Robin #0 (DC/Zero Month)
Second Life of Dr. Mirage #13 (Valiant)
Shadow of the Bat #0 (DC/Zero Month)
Teen Titans #44
Uncanny X-Men #316, 317 (Marvel/Generation Next)
Valiant Vision Glasses (Valiant/Non-Comic Product)
X-Men #36, 37 (Marvel/Generation Next)
Zen back-issues (see checklist)

VANTAGE PICK

Watch for the Vantage Star indicating our top picks!

"The above pick list is a guide based on research, advisors' opinions, and staff opinions — keep in mind that even the experts will disagree. Comics can lose value after months or years. You would be wise to trade or sell books before they lose value. Read over the facts and opinions in Vantage, examine the pick list, and then make your own decisions. Remember: 1) There's no sure thing. Never bet the farm on any one book. 2) It may be fun to hunt for winners, but comics are even more fun to read! Open up one of those sealed polybags and give comics a try!"

- Publisher Rob Golub

FORGET COMICS ... LET'S TALK CATS

Hey, it was just a few months ago that we asked you to name the Vantage cat. You suggested Pix (picks), Azrael, Ultra, Spider-Man, and other fine names.

Neat ideas, we thought. And then we tried 'em out. "Here, Pix! Good boy, Ultra! Come here Azrael!" Uhh ... just a bit awkward. None of these, or any of the others that were suggested, seemed to fit.

Our point: You guys are all great as customers and all, but really, you leave a bit to be desired when it comes to naming cats. Thus, our Creative Director in her infinite wisdom came up with a cat-like name that ties into comics. The name is ... Rajah!

What? Don't you like it? This is a name with meaning!

You know, Rajah, as in the movie *Aladdin*? Okay, so it's not a word straight out of the world of comics. "Spider-Man" it's not. But hey, Rajah is a cartoon character, and he appears in comics . And even more important, Rajah sounds like a cat. Spider-Man sounds like a person. We're thinking that's a pretty important distinction.

So you can all stick to collecting comics. Stay away from cat naming, please. And we'll stick to the picks, not Pix. See ya next issue.

—Rob Golub

GENERATION X: WHERE THE PICKS ARE!

Marvel's new mutant team, Generation X, should enjoy extreme popularity, and perhaps strength in the marker. Many of today's young people, having been hit with a barrage of X-Men marketing, are tired of reading about a team with decades of history behind them. Generation X is a chance for a fresh start.

The **Generation X** #1 launch is preceded by a crossover lead-in called Generation Next.The Generation Next storyline, a four-part series running through Marvel's X-titles, shows great promise for future market standing. Generation Next is: **Uncanny X-Men** #316 (part 1), **X-Men** #36 (part 2), **Uncanny X-Men** #317 (part 3), and **X-Men** #37 (part 4).

These issues are all part of the Generation X origin, and they are likely to be under-ordered. This summer, retailers have been faced with a huge Zero Hour push and other promotions. Plus, orders are low in general compared to last summer when the market was hotter. Thus, we can expect relatively low numbers for Generation Next.

Possibly the most important issue will be **X-Men** #37 which could contain the first appearance of Generation X. You will remember that **New Mutants** #100, which contained the first appearance of the X-Force, gained value nicely several years ago. Just as **New Mutants** #100 contained the unannounced first appearance of X-Force, the same could easily happen in **X-Men** #37. **Vantage** suggests you flip through #37 when it comes in — check that last page for the magic panel ... the one that might have Generation X standing there together, announding to the world that they are, yes, Generation X.

Whether **X-Men** #37 has the magic panel or not, all of Generation Next leads into **Generation X** #1, and all four issues show nice potential.

By the way, for collectibility, stick with the more expensive editions — the ones with the glossy stock. Marvel's cheaper editions coming out two weeks later may be considered reprints.

Generation X #1 and the Chromium Cover

Generation X #1 comes with Marvel's first chromium cover and a $3.95 cover. This book has lots going for it, including: (1) The excitement of a chromium cover from Marvel; and (2) Mmmmm! A new mutant team! It also has lots going against it: (1) $3.95! OUCH! Vantage hates that! It's hard for a comic to gain value when it starts out so high; and (2) It'll be ordered like water in a desert.

Vantage has high hopes for #1, but no guarantees. **Generation X** #2 and up could surprise us.

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THE BATMAN MYSTERY

A new Batman, neither Bruce Wayne nor Azrael, will be introduced during Zero Month according to DC sources. The new Batman may be Nightwing, also known as Dick Grayson, the original Robin.

Vantage has acquired Bat-information from a variety of sources — these pieces in a puzzle aren't enough to form a complete picture, but they do tell us something. **Vantage** has learned of the following from sources at DC comics:

The bottom line? The long-term collectibility of #0s for titles with decades of history behind them seems almost guaranteed...

Batman TM & © 1994 DC Comics

- A new Batman will be introduced during Zero Month. We do not know what issue(s) this will happen in.
- The new Batman introduced during Zero Month will not be Bruce Wayne or Azrael.
- In a few months, Bruce Wayne will become Batman again.
- DC is planning on having Nightwing become the new Batman shortly, but we cannot confirm whether this is the transformation that takes place during Zero Month. However, given the above facts, it does appear possible.

Thus, what we have here is a major event for the Batman titles during Zero Month. Add to this the fact that these titles contain a new look at a dark episode from Batman's past, and DC has **Vantage's** attention.

Plus, Batman #0s are likely to experience long-term interest no matter what they contain. Remember that some price guides will list the #0s before #1s, making the #0s must-haves for many collectors. Between the possible new Batman tie-in, the low orders we expect from a busy Zero Month, and the power of #0s, the most established Batman titles make nice long-term and perhaps strong short-term top picks:

- Batman #0
- Detective Comics #0

And the lesser-known titles, depending on what they contain, could also be important. Be sure to flip through them at your local shop:

THE BATMAN MYSTERY (continued)

- **Legends of the Dark Knight #0**
- **Shadow of the Bat #0**
- **Robin #0**

Keep in mind that while Batman was slow, retailers placed low orders for Knightsend and the #0s. The result with Knightsend has been a pretty hot bunch of books that are sometimes hard to find. According to Capital City Distribution, orders during Zero Month (when every DC book is a #0) went up over the previous month for many titles, but not for the Bat-books. In fact, Bat-orders were lower during Zero Month than they were during the previous month! Wow!

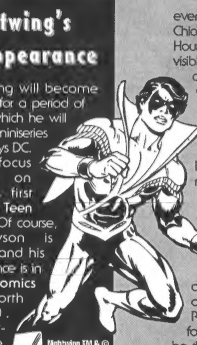
The bottom line? The long-term collectibility of #0s for titles with decades of history behind them seems almost guaranteed, and given the fact that something special appears to be happening in Zero Month's under-ordered Bat-titles, these are the books to watch.

Batman and Robin TM & © 1994 DC Comics

IS ROBIN #0 A KEY BOOK?

Nightwing's First Appearance

Nightwing will become the Batman for a period of time, after which he will get his own miniseries next year, says DC. This could focus attention on Nightwing's first appearance, **Teen Titans** #44. Of course, Dick Grayson is Nightwing, and his first appearance is in **Detective Comics** #38, worth $20,000. Uhhh, perhaps we should stick with **Teen Titans** #44.



Nightwing TM & © 1994 DC Comics

DC has been especially tight-lipped about the events in the Bat-titles for Zero Hour and beyond. At the Chicago ComicCon, they had previews of several Zero Hour books on display, but NONE of the Bat-titles were visible. **Vantage**, in our best imitation of Woodward and Bernstein, asked prolific Bat-writer Denny O'Neil, "How long will Dick Grayson be Batman?" His response — "Nice weather we're having in Chicago."

Given the secretive nature of DC, **Vantage** is forced to don our shabby old trenchcoats to play Lieutenant Columbo so that we can unravel this mystery.

Let's examine the facts: For **Batman** #0, **Shadow of the Bat** #0, and **Detective** #0, DC's advance solicitation indicates only that "more" will be revealed about a dark episode in Batman's past. Only for **Robin** #0 does DC say that Tim Drake "learns the *COMPLETE* story about a mysterious dark episode in the early career of the Dark Knight." (emphasis supplied) Also, Robin ships to retailers a week or more after the four Batman #0s do. Hmmm . . . could **Robin** #0 be the conclusion to the dark episode story? Maybe.

Robin #0, which also explores the origins of all three Robins, could be an important book indeed. Check it out.

ZEN MOVIE SCHEDULED FOR 1995 RELEASE

Zen Intergalactic Ninja is to be featured in a live-action $10 million movie to be released in December 1995, according to Entity Comics. Entity Comics publishes comic books based on the Zen character.

Since most proposed movies don't make it to the screen, **Vantage** asked Zen creator Steve Stern if the Zen movie would really come out. Stern confidently replied, "This is not an option. This is a deal to produce a movie." Stern insisted that the film would appear in theaters everywhere, as opposed to going straight to video.

Stern went on to say that the Zen movie was being produced by Sceneries Entertainment, a producer of European movies who will now pour $10 million into Zen, their first American endeavor.

Also, Vantage sources indicate that the director currently negotiating with Sceneries is someone well known for making successful cult films.

Stern added, "We are also in discussion with an animation company for a Zen animated TV series." Stern hopes to have an animated series out before the movie, by using the coming movie as leverage in putting a cartoon deal together. This is a common strategy in licensing — the more you can license out a concept (in this case, Zen), the more seriously other potential licensors will take your concept.

A Zen motion picture could affect the demand for Zen back-issues considerably (see market analysis article).

What Is This Zen Thing Anyway?

Zen is a heroic down-to-earth blue alien created by Steve Stern (writer) and Dan Cote (artist) in 1987. In November of that year 3,500 copies of **Zen Intergalactic Ninja** #1 were published by Stern and Cote's Zen Comics.

After publishing several issues through their own company, the two creators licensed out their character to Archie Comics for a brief period and then to Entity (see checklist).

Today, Zen has a growing following of fans — with special issues selling close to 100,000 copies each and regular issues selling close to 40,000.

Zen TM & © 1994 Zen Comics, Inc

Zen Intergalactic Licensing

Zen is exclusively licensed worldwide by Surge, Inc., the company responsible for marketing the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles into a mega-billion dollar licensing phenomenon. There are more Zen products out there than super-heroes in the Marvel universe.

Some of the Zen products that have been created: Notebooks from Mead, pens, pencils, masks, action figures, video games, and more. Creator Steve Stern pronounces, "When I think of the future of Zen, I think of the title of a fabulous book by the scientist Freeman Dyson. The title? *Infinite in All Directions.*"

MARKET ANALYSIS: ZEN COULD GO UP!

There was a time when 4,000 books ordered was considered a good month for **Zen**. Today, special issues approach the 100,000 mark. Yes, we said 100,000. In the last few months, **Zen** chromium cover books have had print runs of close to 100,000 each.

While other publishers have spread their efforts over too many characters and crossovers, Entity Comics has shown that sometimes the best things come to those who wait. Rather than go in for a quick killing, Entity marketing efforts have concentrated on their flagship character for over a year now.

This has quietly propelled Entity Comics' market share towards that of major players like Defiant and Topps. In times like these when it seems that there's a big new push from a rich new publisher every few months, Entity has shown that the slow push may be best after all.

Zen TM & © 1994 Zen Comics, Inc.

Of course, let's not forget the strength of the concept. **Zen** is a comic that provides good old-fashioned fun. The air in the room smells of Stan and Jack when you open a **Zen** book. Indeed, **Zen** comics give the reader the sort of good clean fun that got most of us **Vantage** staffers into this crazy business.

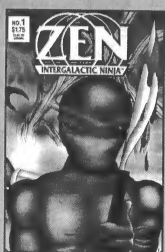
With Zen's popularity growing, a movie finally in the works, and Steve Stern working hard to keep the licensing bandwagon moving, **Vantage** foresees a bright light at the end of Zen's tunnel.

Indeed, the progression from small cult figure to bigger and bigger American Hero seems almost inevitable. The question seems to be more one of when rather than if. **Vantage** will be keeping a close eye on **Zen**. Look for many of those rare **Zen** back-issues in dealers' bargain bins, where they definitely don't belong.

ZEN CHECKLIST & PICKS!

The Early Issues

- **Zen Intergalactic Ninja** #1. Zen Comics, 1987. Print run 3,500. First appearance of Zen. Worth up to $250.
- **Zen Intergalactic Ninja** #2-6. Zen Comics, 1987-1989. Print runs about 4,000 each.
- **Zen Intergalactic Ninja** #1-4, Vol. 2. Zen Comics, 1989-1990. Print runs about 4,000 each.
- **Zen Intergalactic Ninja** #1-5, Vol. 3. Zen Comics, 1991-1992. Print run about 6-10,000 copies each.



Zen Intergalactic Ninja #1 valued at up to $250.

The "In-Between" Issues

- **Christmas Special** #1, Earth Day Annual #1. Zen Comics. 1992-1993.
- **Defend the Earth** #1-3, **Zen Regular Series** #1-3. Archie Comics. 1992.

The Later Issues

Though Entity Comics has produced about two dozen Zen Comics since they were granted the license to do so in early 1993, these are the three issues that seem to stand out from the pack.

- **The Alternity Saga** #0. First Zen published by Entity Comics. 1993.
- **Zen Color Series** #0. First Zen chromium cover. 1993.
- **Zen Color Series** #1. Chromium cover. 1993.

THE SPIDER-MAN EXPLOSION

For those of you living under a rock, Spider-Man's clone from **Amazing Spider-Man** #149 has returned, having been thought dead for nineteen years.

As **Vantage** predicted, Marvel has announced that the clone will be featured in **Web of Spider-Man** and **Spider-Man** for at least the next few months, while Spidey stays in **Amazing** and **Spectacular**.

Although retailers and other advance-orderers are now generally aware of the importance of current Spider-Man issues, **Vantage** feels that these books can still do well in the market. Keep in mind that many speculators left the industry after the crash of 1993. Today, even retailers hesitate to order much more than they sold out of last issue, no matter how big a deal the storyline is. Also keep in mind that with low $1.50 cover prices (except **Spider-Man** which is only $1.95), these books won't need a lot of demand to gain value beyond original retail.

Vantage sees great potential in the Spider-issues due out this month: **Amazing Spider-Man** #395, **Spectacular Spider-Man** #218, **Web of Spider-Man** #118, and **Spider-Man** #52. This all continues to lead into **Amazing Spider-Man** #400, which Marvel staffers are keeping very quiet on.

Also keep an eye on the **Amazing Spider-Man** #149 Milestone reprint, with its metallic ink cover. The book could gain value, though lets not forget the **New Mutants** #87 reprint disaster. That infamous reprint of Cable's first appearance hit the ground with a thud, in spite of some gurus' predictions.

And last but not least, Marvel announced without too much fanfare that **Web of Spider-Man** #118 contains the first appearance of the new clone's costume. If the clone sticks with us in costume for awhile, and it does seem likely that he will, **Web of Spider-Man** #118 could become a very important book.

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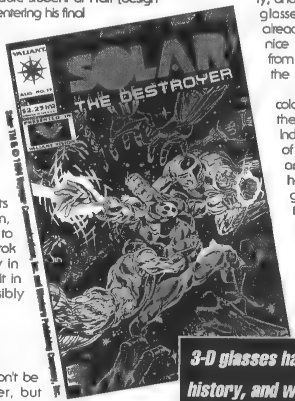
VALIANT VITTLES

Bernard Chang Has No Spare Time

Vantage found this amusing tidbit buried in a Valiant press release and we could not resist showing it to you: **"Second Life of Dr. Mirage** penciler Bernard Chang is considered one of the top artists in comics today. It's hard to believe he finds time to pencil a monthly comic book; Bernard is a full-scholarship architecture student at Pratt (design school in New York), entering his final year. He is also captain of Pratt's NCAA basketball team. Bernard has no spare time."



Here Comes the Power of Acclaim

Valiant and its new owner, Acclaim, have already started to work together. A Turok video game is now in the works. Look for it in Nintendo and possibly other formats.

The Visitor

The Visitor #1 won't be out until December, but Valiant continues to torture us as to who she might be. She? That's what Valiant VP Marty Stever calls the Visitor, but he won't confirm that "she" is a female. We will find out who the Visitor is in November when the Visitor confronts the entire Valiant universe. **The Visitor** will be Valiant's eighteenth monthly title. Valiant has always promised to limit their universe to eighteen monthlies.

Unity: The Lost Chapters

Valiant starts this irregular series in October, focusing on events taking place between different points in Unity. Apparently, Valiant hopes to reclaim some of that old Unity feeling, eh? On a different note, some **Vantage** advisors have been reporting slowing sales for Valiant. However, Valiant VP Marty Stever insists that sales are up.

Valiant Vision Is Now More Collectible

Valiant will be discontinuing Valiant Vision, a move that should make the glasses more collectible. Valiant has sold the Valiant Vision glasses separately from the comics that are specially colored to appear 3-D with the glasses.

3-D glasses have a long, value-gaining history, and with production of Valiant Vision glasses suddenly limited to what's already out there, these glasses show nice long-term potential. Ten years from now, Valiant fans may consider the glasses a truly rare premium.

Psi-Lords, says Valiant, will be colored for Valiant Vision for at least the first six months of the series. Indeed, Valiant has put out dozens of Valiant Vision compatible comics and future Valiant collectors will have no choice but to buy the glasses as back-issues if they wish to view the books in Valiant Vision.

Valiant Vision is being canceled because Valiant and the manufacturer have not been able to agree on contract terms. The dispute, says a Valiant statement, is not over the fees agreed to in licensing the technology for the comics market, but over other language included in the contract.

3-D glasses have a long, value-gaining history, and with production of Valiant Vision glasses suddenly limited to what's already out there, these glasses show nice long-term potential.

"They wanted to include clauses in the contract that would have been potentially harmful to Valiant," said Valiant Publisher Steve Massarsky. "On behalf of Valiant, I apologize for any inconvenience this cancellation may cause our readers, retail outlets, and distributors," said Valiant's Vice-President Marty Stever.

WHO IS WALT WILLEY? SHOULD WE CARE?

He may sound like a geek, but to thousands of women he's not. He's Walt Willey! Never mind that Walt Willey sounds like the weirdest guy on the block, Walt is BIG.

What? You've never heard of him? You have no interest in sexy men (most **Vantage** readers are males)? Ahhh ... but do you have an interest in a comic that could experience strong demand from unexpected sources? Here we go, now **Vantage** has your attention.

Walt Willey is a major Soap TV star. He plays smooth attorney Jackson Montgomery on ABC's *All My Children*. One of the hottest soaps on television, *All My Children* pulls its fans in for keeps with a tight continuity that even Jim Shooter could envy (there have even been crossovers with other soaps). Walt Willey has appeared not only as the main heartthrob of *All My Children*, but also as the co-host of the 1993 Annual Daytime Emmy Awards. Now, of all places, he'll appear in **The Second Life of Dr. Mirage** #13.

He may sound like a geek, but to thousands of women he's not.

Those of you who scoff at the idea of soaps being important to anyone should take a look in the mirror. We are all highly devoted to our own subcultures and interests. If Todd McFarlane were to appear on *All My Children*, you might just watch, eh? And when Willey (no jokes, please) appears in **Dr. Mirage** #13, many TV fans will no doubt be curious enough to check it out.

Surely, some Moms will send their kids into America's comic shops to pick up Willey along with the weekly X-Men and Batman fix. Of course, mom will get Willey's first appearance as a gift from her 19-year-old son who wants to show mom that comics are not just for kids. Indeed, boyfriends will have to buy Willey for girlfriends, so that the couple can attempt to understand each other's bizarre obsessions. And let's not forget those brave non-comic women who will walk into the local shop alone, bravely ignoring the swooping model of the Millennium Falcon and the poster of a scantily-clad Rogue. Anything for Willey.

The plan? Valiant hopes Willey will bring more readers to **Dr. Mirage**, as it is already their most popular title among female fans. Dr. Mirage is a ghost who cannot touch or kiss his wife — the title is an ongoing love story with a super-hero slant.

Despite the silliness of all this, yes, **Dr. Mirage** #13 could gain market attention. Valiant is pushing hard to get publicity from the various Soap magazines that sit on the checkout lane. One Valiant staffer remarked, "If you publish a magazine about soaps you don't have much that's new to write about every month." Well if that's why they'll push Willey's first comic book appearance, then perhaps the same could be said about magazines that cover comics, because, well, here we are, right?

Even if Willey's first appearance doesn't take off immediately, **Dr. Mirage** #13 does have nice potential as a long-term backissue. Comics featuring the big stars from years ago can often command hefty premiums. Comics featuring characters from *The Andy Griffith Show*, *Bonanza*, *Rawhide*, and many more are today sought after collectibles going for $100 a pop or more. Although photo covers (which this **Dr. Mirage** #13 does not have) are considered more collectible, Willey's first comic book appearance does indeed look like a possible decent short-term pick and a much better long-term pick. Buy one for mom and one for the box — there's no telling what mom will do with her copy, but we're betting it won't be mint in twenty years.

The Second Life of Dr. Mirage #13 is due out in August.

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Willey Meets the Valiant Bullpen

"I've always been a big comic fan," said Walt Willey, when asked about his appearance in upcoming The Second Life of Dr. Mirage #13. "It was great fun to work with Bob Layton, Bernard Chang, and all the people over at Valiant. Bob, Bernard, and I worked together to come up with the story. All the facts revealed about me in Dr. Mirage are true, with the possible exception of being chased by a mystic cult," laughed Walt. "I got the biggest thrill when I saw Bernard's first drawings of me. I thought, 'It looks just like me.' We're really going to do it. This August I'm going to be in a comic book!"

Valiant Editor-in-Chief Bob Layton revealed how the story developed. "We talked with Walt for a long time in order to come up with as many elements from his real life as possible to incorporate into the story. Walt really has a tattoo. We show him having the car he drives in and his apartment as shown in the comic is where he really lives. The New York locations are all real. Even the bombs are the real thing."

Willey will be introduced as Dr. Mirage's roommate, now hunted by an evil mystic cult that wants the real tattoo on Willey's hand. Willey appears on the cover in a white tuxedo.

Walt Willey

RETAILERS LOVE VANTAGE

"*Vantage* is the *Wall Street Journal* of the comics world...when *Vantage* speaks, folks listen!"
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VANTAGE QUICKIES

How Surprising

Okay, can you complete this sentence? Kickin' the bucket: Superman, Batman, Green Lantern, Flash, and _____. Can you guess? Who's next to fall on hard times? Who does DC have left to kill or change forever? Not much, so they're turning to Wonder Woman. In **Wonder Woman #0**, a contest begins for the role of Wonder Woman. Among those vying for the title: an Amazon warrior from the newly returned lost tribe. Will it be as hot as the Death of Superman? Perhaps not, but still worth a look.

Superman Dead?

The events in Zero Month led to the unexpected discovery of Superman's dead body in the tomb beneath his memorial. Now we'll be forced to wonder if the Man of Steel who returned during the Reign of the Superman is really Superman! More on this as information comes in.

Superman's corpse TM & © 1994 DC Comics

Now we'll be forced to wonder if the Man of Steel who returned during the Reign of the Superman is really Superman!

Rafferty is Coming

Malibu's new bad guy, Rafferty, will be one of their first big villains. Rafferty will play a major role in the Ultraverse. According to James Robinson, "I've been doing single issue stories in Firearm for awhile now, and I wanted something more epic in scope. I needed a truly epic villain and have created one in Rafferty." First appearance: **Firearm #12**, due out soon.

Rafferty TM & © 1994 Malibu Comics Entertainment

Byrne to do Marvel/DC Crossover

Vantage has learned that John Byrne will be working on an upcoming Marvel/DC crossover. We will keep you informed as details come in.

Azrael Wanders Off to a New Series

In an upcoming issue of **Legends of the Dark Knight**, Azrael wanders off stage. He will be returning in his own series, tentatively titled **Azrael**.

Vengeance of Bane II

Bane will return in a new miniseries, **Vengeance of Bane II**. Bane will believe that the reason he lost against Batman is because of his dependency on drugs. Now absent this weakness, Bane will try for revenge.

Orders drop for Malibu and Valiant

Orders have been falling for Ultraverse and Valiant, according to Capital City Distribution. As of July advance orders, the entire Ultraverse has already fallen out of the top 100 best selling comics. Valiant has only two books in the top 100, **Geomancer #1** and **Ninjak #9**.

The problem for both companies is the same: good story and art alone cannot sell a book. Comic fans want comics that they can read AND collect. To make a universe seem collectable, at least one book from that universe must heat up every once in awhile.

Our advice to Malibu and Valiant? Look at what your competitors are doing with split covers, hot female superheros, and other tricks of the trade. Get with the program, or get demolished.

THE VANTAGE ZERO HOUR CHECKLIST

DC Comics has a variety of obscure titles leading into Zero Hour. Many of these books have been severely under-printed. Please send corrections, deletions, or additions to **Vantage Viewpoints.**

August 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #12. Part one of D.O.A. storyline. Valor meets and "saves" Lori. Valor finds out he's dying.

September 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #13. Part two. Valor's record disappears from Legionnaire computer — the first DC time anomaly?

October 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #14. Part three. Valor reappears in the Legionnaire's computer as an obscure hero who died of lead poisoning in 1994. This creates a paradox: Without Valor's legacy the Legionnaires cannot exist. Valor and Lori get [illegible]

November 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #15. Part four. Valor shows the true meaning of heroism — he decides that if he's going to die, he must do as much good as possible before then.

December 1993:

- ❑ **Valor** #16. Part five. Lori (Glorith) turns out to have betrayed Valor!

January 1994:

- ❑ **Valor** #17. Part six (final part to D.O.A. story). A legionnaire disappears due to the contradictory time-stream. Valor dies, thanks to Glorith. Young Brainiac screams at her, "You've shattered the very laws of time! The consequences . . . they're unimaginable!" A different Valor then arrives, alive, through a time portal! This could turn out to be a very important issue.

February 1994:

- ❑ **Team Titans** #19. Past and future crash around the team.
- ❑ **Valor** #18. With the first Valor dead, the space-time continuum continues to unravel.

March 1994:

- ❑ **Hawkman** #9. DC tells **Vantage** that this issue ties into Zero Hour as, far from Earth, an ominous figure moves on a collision course for the Hawkworld Thanagar.
- ❑ **Legion of Superheroes** #57. Unsettling developments in the time-stream lead to "future" problems.
- ❑ **Team Titans** #20. Several Titans die in this issue, setting the stage for Zero Hour.
- ❑ **Valor** #19. Somebody must take Valor's place in history or the Legionnaires will cease to exist.

April 1994:

- ❑ **Darkstars** #21. The countdown to Zero Hour begins for the Darkstars as former Green Lantern John Stewart is approached by the Darkstars' masters, the Controllers, for a mysterious mission.
- ❑ **Hawkman** #10. Countdown to Zero Hour continues.
- ❑ **Legion of Superheroes** #58. More anomalies in the time stream lead to a surprising alliance.
- ❑ **Team Titans** #21. Hints of Zero Hour continue to unfold as the Team Titans are shattered by dream-land destruction.
- ❑ **Valor** #20. The "dismed" Valor must repair the damaged timeline — the biggest mission of his life. If he fails the future could cease to exist!

May 1994:

- ❑ **Darkstars** #22. Countdown to Zero Hour continues for the Darkstars.
- ❑ **Flash** #92. The future-time fugitive Iris West-Allen makes a panicked flight to the 20th century.
- ❑ **Hawkman** #11. As part of Zero Hour, the Hawkgod speeds towards earth . . . [illegible] Hawkman!
- ❑ **Justice League International** #58. The Judgment Day cross-over ends. This issue leads into Zero Hour
- ❑ **Legionnaires** #16. Several heroes travel through time in this PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!
- ❑ **Legion of Superheroes** #59. Another PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!
- ❑ **Team Titans** #22. The countdown to Zero Hour continues as the U.S. Government sends the Titans to clean up a nuclear disaster.
- ❑ **Valor** #21. Valor is on a mission he must complete. Another PRELUDE TO THE "END OF AN ERA" CROSS-OVER!

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Offer expires October 15, 1994.

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These are two different ***Conan*** promo cards, kindly provided to **Vantage** by FPG and Mike Ploog. For two rare signatures from one of the best artists in the business, this is the place to be!

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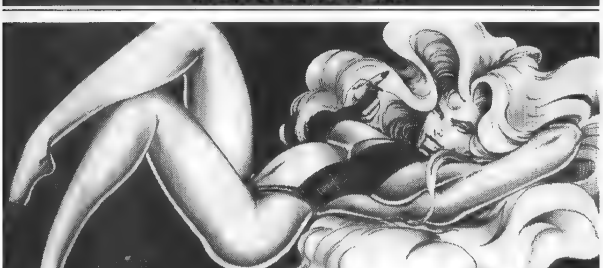

JUMPING INTO THE GAP

The cards solicited for September have two things in their favor: they don't come out in August, up against the Marvel Universe cards, and they don't come out in October, against the Marvel Masterpiece cards. Armed with this knowledge, one would think that a few companies would try to schedule major releases! Just look at a few of the card sets that **Vantage** has spied:

- GI Joe 30th Salute cards, celebrating three decades of the doll and his comics
- Bozo: World's Most Famous Clown cards, celebrating five decades of the clown
- Winnebago Cards, giving you pictures of recreational vehicles
- Goofy Monsters cards, featuring monsters like "Hoopi Moldberg"

Okay, maybe there is a market for each set, but not the kinds of picks that collectors generally look for. Just remember that the variety of cards is escalating enough to make it difficult for any store to carry everything, a trend that makes it more important to keep aware of what cards are showing up. This can take a lot of searching, and **Vantage** found this month's top pick hiding in the Comic Novelties section of dealer solicitations (not a place most dealers look for cards). After the success of the Sandman cards, most people would expect heavy interest in a 78-card set which features Sandman character artwork by Dave McKean. Now add a hardcover book with an introduction by Neil Gaiman and a gift box designed by McKean, and people should be lining up. Why isn't this in the card section of the catalogs?

Vantage Card Picks

Vertigo Tarot Card/Book Set
Lady Death Chromium Cards

Because it's not a set of trading cards, it's a Tarot deck. The popular game that is used as a device to tell the future is at the root of this project. While there is a market for any

Why isn't this in the card section of the catalogs?

Tarot deck, there should be a very, very large market for this Vertigo line tie-in once people see the cards. The set will be printed to order, and Vantage expects many dealers to completely miss the one and only solicitation for it this month. Their oversight can be your gain — be sure to order a set for yourself, and give some consideration to picking up an extra set or two for people who are going to wish they had known it was coming!

The sets will not ship until November, but orders must be placed nearly four months early — be sure you don't put it off!

MAGIC, THE ORGANIZER

Wizards of the Coast® put the gaming and card industry on its ear with the wildly successful card game last year. But many gamers have been left scrambling for a way to organize their decks. Strategy tests require setting up collections of cards that may vary widely. The Mystical Companion from Hunted Harlequin Games offers some assistance. This product contains a six-page listing of all the cards through the Legends release, showing which cards are rare or common, and helping you remember which cards go together in a deck. The importance of this last feature (being able to quickly reassemble the deck you use to play certain systems) cannot be overstated. As a guide to collecting the cards, or for making preparation of play manageable, this relatively inexpensive set of sheets (about $6 for six sets) is a must for serious players of Magic The Gathering™.

A LITTLE FASCINATION WITH DEATH

What is it with comic readers and death? Superman's death, Sandman's Death, and Evil Ernie's pal Lady Death are all hot properties. On the heels of the chromium Evil Ernie card set, Krome Productions is bringing out Lady Death Chromium cards. In a vast improvement over last month's sets, these cards come in packs, with the chance to pick up chase cards (including 1500 autographed

cards). While **Vantage** is certain that these cards will impress, we can't help but worry that the supply will tend to be excessive — these cards are being ordered when Lady Death is possibly at the peak of her popularity, and (as noted above) there are few other big card sets coming out. As long as dealers don't over-speculate on these cards, they should sell out quickly and leave collectors panting (and paying) for more.

SPECULATIVE CORNER

Due to some production problems, Pyramid (Upper Deck) delayed the release of the Valiant Files cards a few months. This should dampen orders even more, but **Vantage** still isn't convinced that there are enough Valiant card collectors out there to support the issue. There is one bright glimmer, however, one that might be expected from the comics company that all but invented the gold book: the gold box. One out of every five boxes of cards will contain a special gold box — one in which every card has a gold stamp. Never mind the ordinary boxes — if you can pick up one (or more) of these boxes cheaply, you may find that you have struck gold. We can't help but remember how the Jurassic Park gold card sets held their value (and increased) even as the regular Jurassic Park cards crashed and burned — perhaps the gold standard will help prevent the Valiant Files from arriving DOA.

Lady Death™ & © 1994 Brian Pulido

QUICK NOTES

One of the best-loved artists from the science fiction community is Vincent DiFate, and Comic Images is finally giving him his own card series, Blueprints of the Future. Vincent is known for the highly realistic depictions of space ships and other future scenes on covers of science fiction magazines and books, and three levels of chase cards should give collectors plenty to watch for. These cards will probably sell much better at science fiction conventions than in comic stores, but the potential number of collectors should be higher than for most science fiction art cards.

It was a radio show, a series of novels, a computer game, and now it's a card set: Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, coming from Cardz. One can't help but wonder if the delightful irreverence of the books will carry over into the card set, and it may be worth picking up a set just to find out. In addition to the four Tekchrome cards we've come to expect from Cardz, the set includes a pair of holograms!

Chris Achilleos Two: Angels & Amazons from FPG offers both original and repainted-classic Achilleos pictures of women in various fantasy settings.

End of an Era and Beyond

Question: What do you get when you mix three Valors, two Legions of Super-Heroes, three villains who can manipulate time and space, and a temporal distortion that makes people vanish and appear out of nowhere? Answer: A VERY BIG mess.

However, this mess is about to be cleaned up courtesy of **End of an Era**, a six-part series which runs through DC's **Legion of Super-Heroes** #60-61, **Legionnaires** #17-18, and **Valor** #22-23 (which are also the last two issues of the title). It's also the prelude to what could possibly be the biggest crossover event of the year: **Zero Hour**.

Fans of the Legion are definitely not new to the alternate time-lines and pocket universes of the 30th Century. But, as of late, with the discovery of the younger, seemingly cloned Legionnaires (**Legion of Super-Heroes** #25) and the death of the 20th Century Valor (**Valor** #17), who became the replacement role model for the Legion after the demise of the pre-**Crisis on Infinite Earths** Superboy, things have been unraveling rather quickly. It's gotten so confusing that even the most die-hard Legion fan's head explodes just thinking about it. In fact my head is smoldering right now just writing this.

Though confusing, the series does have all the elements that have made the **Legion** titles permanent fixtures in the DC Universe for nearly forty years. For instance, it features three of the Legion's greatest villains: Mordru, Glorith, and the Time Trapper, who are trying to manipulate the time stream for their own evil doings (of course they would be). It also stars practically every Legionnaire — living, dead, retired, reserve, substitute, or cloned. When the dust clears after the battle between those good and evil forces, one time-line will emerge with one, and only one, Legion of Super-Heroes. And reading? Did someone say reading? If early issues are any indication, this Zero Hour thing is a web of mystery that will continue to pull the reader right in!

While you're picking these up at your local comic shop you might want to pick up the following back issues as well: **Legion of Super-Heroes** (3rd series) #38, which features the death of the pre-Crisis Superboy, and **Legion of Super-Heroes** (4th series) #4, 5, 8, 9, Annual 1 and Annual 2, which will give you some insight into the latest time-line of the Legion. Not only will these serve as reference points so your brain doesn't melt reading **End of an Era**, but they also might be grabbed up quickly once **Zero Hour** kicks into high gear this summer.

Those recommendations are just for starters. Of course, I could always recommend more, but I wouldn't want your head to melt now. It just wouldn't look right.

Victory

(five issue mini-series)
Topps Comics

It's a mini-series! It's a crossover! It's a crossover contained in a mini-series!

Original ain't it? Rather than have this five-part epic cross over into individual titles, Topps has decided the story, which involves all of the heroes of the late Jack Kirby's "Kirbyverse," should encompass one mini-series so as not to confuse the new and old readers, and save them money as well.

Don't worry, if you've never read a "Kirbyverse" comic in your life writer Kurt (**Marvels, Valor**) Busiek has included at the end of the first issue a brief synopsis on each character that will be involved in **Victory**. Joining Busiek is the very talented Keith (**Mars Attacks, Legion of Super Heroes**) Giffen. With his packed panels and square-jawed characters he pays homage to the late Kirby (especially on the character Lady Lightning).

If you want to read something other than Marvel or DC, pick this title up. I mean, how can you not pick up a book where the conquering alien says he has enough power to "bring a world to its knees"? This is the one to read.

SIMONSON, THE SLAMMERS, AND MORE!

Star Slammers™ & © 1994 Walt Simonson

Walter Simonson talks to *Vantage* about his Star Slammers project for Malibu Comics ...and more!

VANTAGE: Tell me about Star Slammers.

SIMONSON: The Slammers began life as a promotional series fanzine printed on an offset press from a guy's basement to help promote the WorldCon bid of the Washington Science Fiction Association back in 1974. That ended up being my portfolio when I went to New York looking for work. So the Star Slammers was the actual material in my portfolio.

VANTAGE: Did it get you work?

SIMONSON: Yes! It got me work very quickly actually. I was very lucky!

VANTAGE: So the Star Slammers appearance in the fanzine was before you were doing anything for Marvel or anyone else?

SIMONSON: Yes. That story was done while I was in art school! Later, Marvel ran the first appearance, the unprinted first appearance, in Marvel Age. That's where I originally conceived the idea. It was conceived as sort of a series of one page broad sheets of six or seven panels, in kind of a cartoony fashion. That was really just for fun, created out of my interest in comics. And then somewhere after that I actually drew a five-pager. That never saw print anywhere. The first couple were done ... I would guess '68, '69.

VANTAGE: And then after that?

"The Slammers began life as a promotional series fanzine printed on an offset press from a guy's basement..."

SIMONSON: Well after that I guess it lay dormant for a number of years. Marvel decided to publish graphic novels. This was the early '80s or '82 I believe. They decided to use the Aliens graphic novel that Heavy Metal had published years earlier, that I had drawn and Archie Goodwin had written, as a template for the Marvel Graphic Novels for formatting and stuff like that. Early on I was talking to Archie, and Marvel was interested in publishing not only their own characters, but also creator-owned characters. I think the first graphic novel like that they published was probably Jim Starlin's Dreadstar. Of course, it's back too! Characters who never die! (laughter) It took me about five months to do the sixty-four page story for Marvel.

VANTAGE: And today?

SIMONSON: Eventually, I began looking for some stuff I'd like to do again. I've always had the Slammers in the back of my mind. The concept. With the aperture in comics now with a lot of creator-owned stuff going around, it seemed like a good time to do it.

VANTAGE: Why do you think you've always had it in the back of your mind? It keeps recurring.

SIMONSON: Well, I like the idea. I guess all creators to some extent are in love with their creations. So I always had the Slammers in mind as kind of a large, tapestry idea. By this I mean the idea that the Slammers were an organization of mercenaries who kind of rose to power and glory and then crumple into dust eventually. I liked to tell stories kind of anywhere along this time-line, say five, ten, fifteen thousand years, however grandiose I wanted to get. It gave me the option really, of doing any kind of story I wanted to, because it's got a common background. That way I wouldn't be trapped by my own orthodoxy — I'd be able to create whatever I'd want to create. Whether I'll live long enough to do that, I'm not sure. (laughter) But it did give me a very broad canvass on which to play.

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come...
Wm. Shakespeare
IT WASN'T A SLEEP OF DEATH...
...BUT IT WAS AS DEEP AS DEATH GET!
EVEN THE SURVIVORS OF CONFLICTS HAVE BEEN SHOT DOWN...
STILL, THE DREAMS WERE CRUEL...
NOBODY SHUTS DOWN THE DREAMS

VANTAGE: *Would you say it's a space opera?*

SIMONSON: Yes, very much.

VANTAGE: *Why did you go with Malibu? Were you considering a couple of different companies?*

SIMONSON: I sort of shopped around. Really, the simple fact is, I got the best deal from Malibu. All things being equal, if I'm going to have fun doing what I'm doing, if the deal was better there, I thought well, that's an okay basis to make a decision.

VANTAGE: *Now this is a miniseries, right?*

SIMONSON: Yes, a five-issue miniseries. If it does okay and nobody loses too much money on it. I also have some other creator-owned ideas. There's a dream fantasy I'd like to do. I think some of my other ideas are less commercial in some respects. I will probably do a short Freex story for Malibu, for the Ultraverse. I'd like to do something with my wife. We've talked some about her writing the Freex story, what would probably be three, six to eight page chapters.

"I see a lot of guys who are just starting out — they're taking sabbaticals, they're knocking off for awhile."

VANTAGE: *You really have a unique drawing style. You can just be picked right out. It doesn't blend in and it doesn't look like any other artist's work.*

SIMONSON: I guess not. Well I try and I try and I ...

VANTAGE: *I'm not saying you don't draw beautifully ... (laughter). Still, it is different — or am I just crazy and it's not?*

SIMONSON: Well I have a lot of friends, I see a lot of guys, and a lot of their work appearing as other artists' material, if you know what I mean. Even if people are using my work as a springboard, I don't see a lot of that. If there's any reason for it all, I think it's that whenever I'm drawing I usually use a reference or as close a reference as I can. I also try and think about the project I'm drawing, and I try and create a style. The style is always my own, but I try to approach each project on its own merit. The idea there is to try and keep myself interested. One of the things I am concerned about is I know a lot of guys or I see a lot of work where, in a sense, the work has reached a certain level of achievement, but maybe not go beyond that. But also I know guys have burned out doing work in comics. It's very easy to do. You produce a huge amount of work in a very short period of time. I see a lot of guys who are just starting out — they're taking sabbaticals, they're knocking off for awhile. It's hard to produce that much stuff and stay interested. It is a concern of mine. I don't want to reach a point where I get up in the morning and just hack the stuff.

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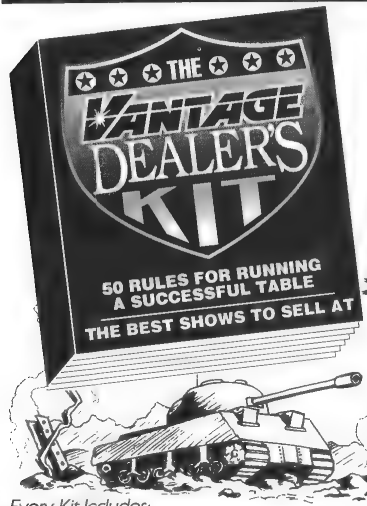

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DC Comics Interview

Vantage sat down for a chat with DC editor Mike McAvennie about Zero Hour, the future of the DC universe, and other neat stuff!

VANTAGE: So what do you do over there at DC Comics?

MCAVENNIE: Well, I work with KC Carlson on Legion and Legion of Super-Heroes, and Valor, as well as Zero Hour. I'm just running around making sure everyone's got their plot or their dialogue or their artwork, and making sure everything is down in production when it needs to go down there. I'm involved in the editorial aspect, in plot and characterization, and what we're going to do.

VANTAGE: Tell me about Zero Hour.

MCAVENNIE: Basically what's been happening is that for quite a long time now, time has been sort of destroying itself. It's been caving in from the beginning of time and the end of time, closing in further and further into our present. Eventually it's going to get to the point where it's going to collapse on itself. It's only noticed by a few people at first. As time has gone on, in the last few months in various books, strange things have been popping up, like dinosaurs in the park or costume changes.

VANTAGE: Why did you chose to start this off with the lesser-known books?

MCAVENNIE: I wouldn't say that they're lesser known — maybe Valor — but I think we basically started it there because we were the ones in charge of Zero Hour. We thought it would be a good way to tie in the 30th century characters. It's a rarity when you actually see members of the Legion or any 30th century characters tie in with the DC universe. For years they've always been the outsiders in the crossovers.

VANTAGE: This was a rare opportunity to get them involved?

MCAVENNIE: Yeah, to get them involved. And it was a good feeling to actually do that because it reminds people that DC is doing this too.

VANTAGE: Will the number zero issues be special or are they really just regular issues with number zero on them?

MCAVENNIE: No, they're special. One thing that we were concerned about at first was we didn't want everybody to just do, "Oh here's this hero's origin in issue #0, retold for

the one-billionth time." In some cases it is their origin, but there's a new twist to it. One that we haven't seen before. Or a different perspective. In other cases it's the first time our hero is made a villain and that will play a huge role in their life.

"We wanted readers to feel that this was a starting point...After ZERO HOUR you can come in and you don't need to know who so-and-so is and what planet he is from."

VANTAGE: Speaking of new twists, some time during all of this Zero Hour hoopla, we're going to see a new Batman that's not Azrael and not Bruce Wayne, right?

MCAVENNIE: I'm not sure what exactly is the case with that and I'm not free to say.

VANTAGE: There's also something going on with Green Lantern? Can you talk about that?

MCAVENNIE: Yeah, well basically with Green Lantern he's going to learn a lot about what his limitations are. He's going to learn a lot about his predecessor and what it means to be Green Lantern.

VANTAGE: How is this universe going to be affected after Zero Hour? What can readers expect?

MCAVENNIE: We wanted readers to feel that this was a starting point. For example, we've had a hard time trying to get readers to check Legions out because there's so much history behind it. After Zero Hour you can come in and you don't need to know who so-and-so is and what planet he is from.

VANTAGE: Will the books after Zero Month be intro books?

MCAVENNIE: I wouldn't say that they're intro books completely. We are introducing several titles to the DC universe. Manhunter and Starman will be able to be introduced for the first time and we're going to learn their origins in Issue #0. For others, we're going to see different points of view. New supporting characters, or new costumes for some people. It's just going to be a new perspective, and again it's not something that's going to be cluttered in history. They don't have to check out 400 issues of Superman to find out about this character.

VANTAGE: It all sounds like what DC did with Superman several years ago, with John Byrne. Kind of a fresh look at Superman and more accessibility to new readers.

MCAVENNIE: That's what it all comes down to ... accessibility.

VANTAGE: Is Valor coming back? I was disappointed to see it canceled.

MCAVENNIE: Yeah, that's my feeling too. At first we thought we would cancel it because of numbers but then the numbers were going up, which was interesting. I think it was more of an editorial decision in the long run.

VANTAGE: So he's coming back but not in his own title?

MCAVENNIE: Yeah, at least not right now. He will appear in the 30th century eventually.

VANTAGE: Are you all nervous at all, putting all your eggs in one basket? What if readers don't go for this Zero Hour thing?

MCAVENNIE: Well there's always going to be that worry, but we don't necessarily think that way. I think we're pretty confident with what we've got and readers are going to respond to it. As for whether we put all of our eggs in one basket, I think you could pretty much say that about all of the other companies. Marvel does it, Ultraverse does it, they all tend to do it. You either hit or miss. If you hit, that's great. If you miss, you try something else.

THE VIEW FROM OBLIVION

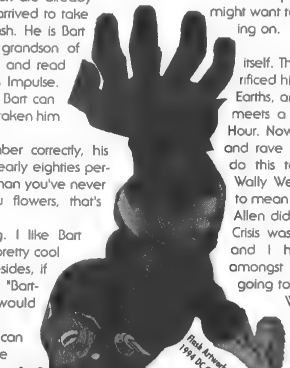
By Corey Bond

As readers of the Flash are already aware, a new hero has arrived to take up the mantle of Kid Flash. He is Bart Allen, the 30th century grandson of Barry Allen (just accept it and read on), and he is known as Impulse. And considering how fast Bart can move, I'm surprised it has taken him this long to get here.

After all, if I remember correctly, his coming was heralded in early eighties perfume commercials: "If a man you've never met suddenly gives you flowers, that's Impulse."

Don't get me wrong. I like Bart Allen, and "Impulse" is a pretty cool name for a speedster. Besides, if DC had tried to call him "Bart-Man," there probably would have been a lawsuit.

The only thing that I can fault Bart for is taking the Kid Flash position. Doesn't he understand why there was an opening for the job? It's not simply the strict employment requirements (applicant must be able to run at Warp Speed). It's the opportunity for advancement. When the person in the Flash position leaves the job, then the person doing the Kid Flash gig must take his place. And no one wants that job, because in the previous Flash's paperwork, the "Reason for Leaving" blank is always filled in with the word "Death."



Flash Artwork ™ & © 1994 DC Comics, Inc.

Spoiler Warning: If you haven't been reading DC's Zero Hour series (or Vantage, which has pretty much spelled out every element of its plot in detail), then you might want to catch up before reading on.

History is repeating itself. The Barry Allen Flash sacrificed himself in Crisis on Infinite Earths, and the Wally West Flash meets a similar destiny in Zero Hour. Now I'm not going to rant and rave about DC's decision to do this to Flash, even though Wally West has probably come to mean as much to me as Barry Allen did to readers back when Crisis was published. My friends and I have already wailed amongst ourselves. What I am going to do is try to see it from Wally's point of view.

If I were Wally, I'd be ticked. The original Supergirl met her untimely end back in Crisis as well, yet I haven't heard anything about "history repeating itself" when it comes to the Matrix Supergirl. I mean, a heroic death is noble and all, but if I were Wally I'd be crying, "Hey! If I've gotta go, I'm taking her with me!" Fair is fair. Although I suppose I shouldn't gripe too loudly. I rather like the new Supergirl, and I'd hate to see a Zero Hour cover shot with her limp body in Superman's arms. DC has been rather bloodthirsty with their characters lately.

But back to the new kid, Impulse. He's soon going to be faced with a serious Good News/Bad News Scenario. The good news: He'll be starring in his own book. The bad

news: It's the Flash. Honestly, if I were Impulse, my crime-fighting ability would be considerably hampered by some sort of Epic Crossover Anxiety. I'm not sure what it should be called, this fear of mini-series that retroactively alter DC's continuity. RetConPhobia, perhaps?

Whoever is in the Flash costume always ends up being the sacrificial lamb at the DC Universe company picnic. Ten years down the line, someone could decide that, like Crisis, Zero Hour never really ended, and do another one of these summer crossovers to fix all the bugs in their post-zero storylines. And when that happens, Impulse is toast.

Which, thankfully, would not impede his television career. Barry Allen got his own TV show after the Crisis, and he looked pretty good for the fastest corpse alive. Actually, now that I think about it, Impulse would have been a great guest star on the Flash show. I can hear Tina McGee saying, in actress Amanda Pays' wonderful accent, "That's odd. Barry, some man I've never met just gave me flowers."

"Ah," Barry would reply. "That's Impulse."

[Editor's note: **Vantage** showed this article to **Flash** writer Mark Waid. His jovial response: "Very funny, and enjoyable. However . . . . Wally's fate -- as planned for over a year -- is far WORSE than death, a fate that leads directly into the six-part 'Terminal Velocity' that culminates in **Flash** #100."]

Dream Factory Update:

For those of you tuning in late, last month's Oblivious topic was Dream Factory's proposed chain of Dream Factory For Her comic stores. While I applaud any comic store that includes 25-year-old professional women in its target demographics, I maintain that a comic store chain aimed exclusively at women is still a silly, unpopular concept, and thus a bad business move. I also want to point out that Dream Factory seems to be coming around to my way of thinking. Recent press releases refer to their "for women only" stores simply as "Dream Factory." The Dark Ages "For Her" tag is nowhere to be found. It's a start.

Corey Bond, still living in Oblivion, is glad to be someone other than Flash, Kid Flash, or, come to think of it, anybody else in the DC universe.

VANTAGE VIEWPOINTS

10238 West National Ave, #166, West Allis, WI 53227

Dear Vantage,

In reference to Jim Hulin's letter where he wanted to know how past picks are doing (**Vantage: Press Release Review** #3) — your response, "We don't dwell on the bad calls, or the good ones for that matter, because **Vantage** is a forward looking magazine," is kind of a cop-out.

No, you don't have to dwell on the bad calls, but I think it's very important that you keep us updated on your picks — good or bad. It's to your advantage, as well. Acknowledging your mistakes will help establish credibility by showing that, while you may not exactly be proud of your bad picks, you are at least willing to be honest about them.

Pointing to your successes is a little trickier— it's tough to do without coming across as bragging, and hype is the last thing the serious fan wants. My suggestion is that you also refer to the specific back-issue of **Vantage** where a given pick originally appeared. It's quite easy for somebody to just come along and say, "We picked Green Lantern #48 before it came out!" — but if you can document your claim by pointing to the original article as proof ("See **Vantage** #7, Volume II, January 1994"), you're that much ahead of the game. It isn't bragging if you can back it up.

Gary Dunaier
Flushing, NY

Gary, you are obviously insane. You have no idea what you are talking about and you need a sedative… uhhh, just kidding. Gary, you make some excellent points that we just may make use of. As for our "cop-out," try to understand that the main thrust of our mission (which is stated in the masthead) is to provide information not generally available to collectors or even retailers. That's why we concentrate on the future, not the past. We feel that the past has little place in ***Vantage****. Also, it's hard to know when a pick is bad. Was* ***Mantra*** *#1 a bad pick? It never really went over cover. But how do we know* ***Mantra*** *#1 won't someday go over cover, especially with the possibility of an Ultraverse TV cartoon? (Of course, there'll be no cartoon if they don't get orders up — see "Quickies" this issue). It may seem convenient, but it really is much easier to ID good picks than bad picks.*

Dear Rob!!

Sorry for the incorrect punctuation (instead of using a comma), but it is hard for me to contain my excitement! I have been a **Vantage** fan since day one. Although you have had many astounding picks, I feel **Amazing Spider-Man** #149-150 is going to be enormous!

I honestly feel that this pick will be like getting an **Amazing Spider-Man** #300 for a song! And if Marvel plays their cards right, this thing could blow the roof off current book price of **ASM** #149-150.

Thank you so very much for your magazine. Your insight had been invaluable and I am doing all that I can to promote **Vantage** everywhere I go!

David Ganaway
Huntsville, AL

We swear, we did not write this letter. Nor did Rob's mom, nor anyone else we know. David, dealers have been offering #149 for up to $200 at the shows. We think the book will settle in at a lower price by the time you read this, but still, that's pretty amazing, eh? Wait 'til you see what we've got cookin' for next issue.

Dear VV,

In the May 1994 issue of **Vantage**, the news that you would no longer use the word "investment" in your publication got me to thinkin'. I fully understand your point of view. However, given some of the investment choices out there, collectibles seem the most secure. Besides, what entertainment value is there in a CD? (That's certificate of deposit, not compact disc.) Stocks are a gamble at best, and I'd rather play the ponies instead. The right comic book, well kept, gets my vote for a long-term, low-cost investment. The "investment" is in the appreciation of the art itself.

If only I'd known, nearly twenty years ago, that Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, and although uncool, Archie would make museum pieces. Here's the bummer: parents are discouraging the business, just like mine did. The only vindication is in reminding them of the boxes of DC and Marvel that they forced me to pitch, and showing them the market value for issues I still remember reading.

John M. Dean
Jeannette, PA

John, we agree with you that comics can be excellent long-term investments. That's why we often point out books with long-term potential, like this month's Willey book. For those of you who can't handle the excitement of the up-and-down market for hot comics, our long-term picks are perfect.

We feel strongly that comics are for reading first, but that there's nothing wrong with the collectibles market. The market: 1) Provides highly efficient distribution of back-issues to readers. Ask any economist. 2) Is great fun and excitement. 3) Teaches people how to shop and bargain… the list goes on and on.

Hey! You! Yeah, you! We need letters! Write us!

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